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ABSTRACT

Administrative practices used by participants in administrator preparation programs who return to practice are described in this paper. The practices, which extend reflective, intellectual, critical, and participatory concepts into action models, include restructured educational assessment, peer coaching, and professional development. All are based on reflective practice, participatory empowerment, intellectual knowledge, and critical understanding. The recommendation is made that university preparation programs continue to serve as models for administrators. (28 references) (LMI)

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Educative Values and Administrative Action: Practitioners Redefining Their Organizations

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Challenging Conventional Assumptions About Schooling:
Implications for Preparing School Leaders

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Educative Values and Administrative Action: Practitioners Redefining Their Organizations

Introduction: The University Model

Will tomorrow's schools be different? The National Policy Board for Educational Administration has sought to address the urgency of this question by proposing changes in the preparation of educational leaders. Within the debate are the issues surrounding the reconceptualization of education and the practice of leadership on creating the transformation. The reconceptualization of education hinges on changing the present concept of leadership and creating a new perspective. The challenge for the shift to the "new reality" begins with the preparation of the leadership (Drucker, 1989).

Through the initiatives of organizations such as the National Policy Board, the University Council for Educational Administration, and the Danforth Foundation, the philosophical basis for change in administrative preparation programs has contributed to changes in leadership practice. University programs have begun to examine their practice of training for administration. Culture, ideas, past practice, methods and motives all require examination (Bates, 1987), and unless the language of the structure and the operation of the organization are addressed, the traditional patterns will continue (Foster, 1989).

Literature addresses a number of concerns with regard to the status of preparation and implications for the future. These

include control and the strategies that maintain and perpetuate control; isolation and fragmentation within the field; minimal professional status for the educational leader; and language derived from a non-educational agenda. In addressing these concerns, preparation programs have begun to encourage the attributes of reflective, participatory, critical and intellectual leadership within preparation participants (Jackson, 1990).

The underlying assumption or theory is that programs encouraging these attributes can create different leaders who will restructure our schools. Although the preparation process for school leaders can initiate espoused change, lasting transformation embodies the values indigenous to the preparational programs and is reflected in sustained practice. Extending beyond the preparation programs, its meaning is defined when the exemplars are, themselves, transformed through practice. The transfer of theory into sustained practice leading to reconceptualized schools is critical in assessing the success of university preparation programs.

The university programs have served as models for the administrators who have extended the reflective, intellectual, critical, and participatory exemplars into action models. The following discussion will examine the practices which exemplify the theory and purpose of preparation programs and which lead to sustained practice resulting in restructured schools. As participants in preparation programs return to practice, they

look to alternative possibilities.

The first practice examines the structure of administrative assessment. The organization as presently structured requires a summative evaluation for school administrators. An alternative possibility is educative assessment, modeled on the university, which restructures the practice of evaluation. Educational leaders develop reflective practices which can lead to the transformation of schools.

The second practice views peer coaching as a process for reconceptualizing schools.

The third practice considers components essential to professional development activities and as a way of restructuring schools.

Reflective Practice Through Educative Assessment

"Ours is and has been for some time a broadly reflective culture." (McCarthy, 1991 p.20). In such cultural complexity the inherent focus of educational leaders has been to support the cultural norms of practice in their daily decision making. The difficulty arises because such reflection becomes a means of confirming the status quo rather than transforming practice.

Machan (1990) argues that public servants are motivated by private interests, and well intended ideas can result in the loss of support by their constituency. Administrators, initiating change, may realign their ideals to meet their perceived public expectations, hence status quo continues. Educative assessment

introduces moral leadership through direction setting, dialogue, and a redefinition of dialectic values.

Practice essential for ongoing leadership growth is presented and discussed: reflective practice, participatory empowerment, intellectual knowledge, critical understanding. By providing the attribute framework, the discussion becomes meaningful as it then focuses on the moral awareness and intent of the leadership action. Evaluation then moves from the traditional manipulating hierarchy toward the process of meaningful activity.

This approach opens the capacity for critical self-evaluation. This model of assessment is being implemented with administration in the school district. Comments from administrators following the assessment cite new levels of shared understanding, the willingness to reveal presuppositions, and support for risk-taking and transformational modes of action.

Educative Assessment - Reflective Practice

Greenfield (1988) acknowledges the importance of practicing administrators gaining insight into the nature of their craft through reflective practice. Educative assessment enables and requires administrators to reexamine and question their beliefs and practice, and supports ongoing questioning of one's values. Greenfield further states that using language in all its richness allows us to understand the organization. In seeking clarification, Greenfield (1988) cites Hodgkinson who proposes

that language is a basic and powerful administrative tool. The assessment process commences with administrators jointly reflecting on recent initiatives and actions. They cooperatively categorize the actions by attribute which facilitates an exchange on the reflection that preceded the decisions. During such dialogue, confirmation is given for the practice of questioning present routines and envisioning change. Using language to restate one's purpose and beliefs has been beneficial to the administrators in refocusing their realities and possibilities.

Educative Assessment - Participatory Empowerment

The practice of educational administration involves the necessary process of negotiation which occurs between groups or individuals (Bates, 1982). One widespread conflict requiring negotiation exists between those holding representative and participatory views of democracy. A critical practice of educational administration would, according to Bates (1982), need to be reflective concerning such negotiations and "placing them within the context of a critique of domination and a commitment to struggle in the interest of a better world" (p.71). Administrators daily face conflict in addressing parent groups, teacher unions, board members, colleagues, community members and other special interest groups. And on occasion they justify manipulation as a means to an end. Success is evaluated by winning standards and the term nice guys finish last has been the implicit message. Nevertheless, communication is integral and

educative assessment acknowledges support for the process, not the result. Administrators have acknowledged the value of the commentary as they balance between leadership for cohesiveness and leadership for change which may engender conflict. Additional responses have indicated that the process facilitates reflection on diverse cultural values which have assisted in understanding attitudes inherent to a democratic process.

Educative Assessment - Intellectual Knowledge

In this model educational leaders are encouraged to become, in Giroux's (1988) terminology, transformational intellectuals, committed and dedicated to creating and sustaining a vision of what education should be. Such a vision is guided by meaningful, relevant, and informed practice. Practitioners accept that knowledge is essential to leadership, but few are able to initiate a focus of life-long learning for the purpose of leadership. Informed practice is an espoused assumption; however, by focusing on intellectual knowledge through educative assessment, an array of research can be discussed for transforming educational practice. To reconceptualize the link between educational leadership and meaningful education requires language that incorporates a pedagogy outside the political bureaucracy (Giroux, 1988). The assessment enables commentary on research, exemplars, and encourages a continuum of learning. Administrators acknowledge that in this perspective, knowledge becomes information to engage in transformation rather than the

acquisition of a power-base. And they further remark this perspective opens themselves to critique. As with the University model it changes the perceived role of the educational leaders by moving beyond the notion of time-on-task administration toward developing the ability to translate theory and research into practice.

Educative Assessment - Critical Understanding

Foster (1986), believes administrative leadership can create change through critical theory that offers reflective inquiry. Such theory provides a language for addressing administration that enables the leadership, through understanding, to become practitioners who will reconceptualize education (Foster 1989). To question and reject elements of practice, to provide for a shared communicative action, to acquire knowledge and understanding is not transformational leadership. To use the knowledge, action, and ideas to transform practice is to move beyond conformity, toward practicing critical and moral leadership. Critical practice requires a commitment to possibilities, consistently striving to alter and take action. The necessity of "thorough-going" change necessitates corresponding action to implement the possibilities (McCarthy, 1991). Caution is the most frequent response from the administrators on action issues. The dialogue provides encouragement for continued development toward transformation and an exchange of perspectives on purpose and direction. An

exchange of views, including argument on what is in the best interest of the students, provides meaning to the participants as well as continues to reshape the leadership position. The administrators remark on greater trust and collegial support as the discussion is supported by a written report.

Inevitably interpretive requests call for suggestions and continued reflection. The response typically is twofold. First discussed are the leadership strengths in each attribute, as evidence suggests a balance of the leadership attributes is necessary for transformative leadership. For example, a critical perspective without strong reflective practice may not foster lasting change. Discussion refocuses on the attributes and the individual perspective of the administrator with the intent of broadening avenues for practice. Second, the discussion provides critical reflection on the ways in which a district-wide perspective can support the actions initiated by the administrator, thereby empowering the administrator to identify and suggest changes regarding the social and institutional restraints. For educative assessment to have legitimacy it must foster dialogue and enable an exchange of perspectives to solidify the practice of transformational leadership.

Participatory Empowerment Through Peer Coaching

In the current structure of schools, administrators are responsible for supervision and evaluation of professional staff. Supervision may be viewed as a process that facilitates the

professional growth of teachers, resulting in improved teaching skills and expanded teaching repertoires (Glatthorn, 1984; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988).

Administrators faced with the challenge of reform must organize, stimulate, or design activities for staff members that nurture the ingredients of renewal, namely individual teacher professional development, improved school culture, and enhanced school effectiveness (Garmston, 1987). Administrators face barriers, however, in their attempt to provide staff with professional growth opportunities: lack of time due to other responsibilities and demands, perceived or real lack of knowledge concerning teaching and learning, and mistrust resulting from teachers' negative experiences with past supervisory and evaluative interventions (Costa and Garmston, 1987). Peer coaching is a hopeful strategy for school improvement, for peer coaching encourages teachers to work collegially with each other in professional growth activities (Garmston, 1987).

Munro and Elliot (1987) define peer coaching as "a method of improving teacher effectiveness in which teachers work with one or more colleagues to achieve specific instructional goals through a process of regular observation and feedback" (p. 25). Peer coaching programs should grow out of and foster collegiality and cooperation (Munro & Elliot, 1987). As such, peer coaching may be a process that affects the individuals who participate, as well as the administrator's role and function within the school organization. Changes in administrative role and function

necessitate the acquisition of new skills. Administrative preparation programs must address these changing needs.

Peer Coaching - Participatory Empowerment

One need is to break down the professional isolation found in most schools, isolation that teachers seem to prefer (Liebman and Miller, 1984). This isolation is perhaps the greatest obstacle to professional development (Rosenholtz, 1984). In studies of successful schools, however, researchers find evidence of collegial interaction and experimentation (Little, 1982). Principals in effective schools set professional improvement as a clear expectation (Little, 1982). Administrators must help create an environment that values collegiality, experimentation, and trust (Saphier & King, 1985).

There is evidence to indicate that as teachers participate in the role of supervising themselves, a change in attitudes and beliefs about themselves and others takes place. Participants in the peer coaching process note an increased willingness to share ideas with colleagues. Peer coaching is viewed by some as the catalyst for a change in the role of the teacher in the school, resulting in an improved school climate. Teachers feel better about themselves and their profession (Fuhrman, 1990).

Participants in peer coaching believe that the peer coaching process results in changes in how teachers interact with students, other teachers, and administrators. Peer coaching may be a way for teachers to take responsibility for their own

professional growth, a role traditionally occupied by administrators. In addition, the peer coaching process increases the amount of communication between teachers and administrators concerning teaching. Both teachers and administrators seem open to a variety of instructional strategies (Fuhrman, 1990).

Peer coaching may lead to a blurring of the traditional roles of teacher as the designer/implementor of instruction and the administrator as the supervisor/evaluator of instruction. Administrators, in an attempt to model risk-taking, may experiment with teaching strategies in the classroom as they are "coached" by a teacher. The relationship between administrators and teachers in such a relationship seems to become one of "we're all in this together" (Fuhrman, 1990).

Peer Coaching - Reflective Practice

Administrators who support peer coaching efforts help to foster reflective thinking. When teachers coach other teachers, there is an increase in professional dialogue among teachers concerning instruction (Garmston and Eblen, 1988). Peer coaching helps to achieve "practice competence" through reflection-in action, the ability to think about a skill while performing the skill (Schon, 1987).

Through professional discussions about teaching and learning, participants in peer coaching develop a mutual respect for each other. A sense of community, of common purpose, develops. Teachers learn to value feedback provided by their

colleagues (Fuhrman, 1990). Administrators who wish to encourage reflective thinking may benefit from the peer coaching experience.

Peer Coaching - Critical Understanding

Administrators who desire to foster change in schools need to recognize that change occurs first at the individual level (Loucks-Horsley, 1988). Teachers who experiment with teaching strategies that are new to them learn that risk-taking is beneficial. Such teachers are willing to share their ideas with others, and learn how to think critically about their own beliefs. In addition, teachers engaged in peer coaching experiences tend to view teaching and learning through multiple lenses, collecting data about instruction in different ways (Fuhrman, 1990).

Peer Coaching - Intellectual Knowledge

A study of a secondary school peer coaching program (Fuhrman, 1990) found that reflective practice can be enhanced when teachers coach other teachers. Norms of experimentation, trust, autonomy, and learning are encouraged by the peer coaching process. Teachers are more willing to share ideas and concerns about teaching.

Participants in peer coaching programs also exhibit collegiality, talking about teaching at lunch and in the hallways and classrooms of the school as well as participating in frequent

observation and feedback concerning teaching. Teachers plan and design materials together, engage in co-planning and team teaching sessions, and participate in "public teaching", teaching in front of other adults.

Peer coaching also causes a change in administrator/teacher relationships. Increased communication and discussion about teaching and learning take place. Traditional roles for teachers and administrators break down as teachers observe instruction. Teachers begin to assume responsibility for their own professional development (Fuhrman, 1990).

Peer coaching allows change to take place individually at first, and then collectively, resulting in the possibility of school-wide change. The peer coaching process does not seek to "fix" teachers, but instead aids in the development of the norms of risk-taking and experimentation. The role of teacher changes from follower to leader, and the role of administrator changes from supervisor to facilitator. A new participatory culture in schools emerges, a culture based on collegiality, experimentation, trust, autonomy, and learning.

Intellectual Knowledge Through Professional Development

During the course of this century, philosophers and practitioners have developed various theories of adult education. Application of Dewey's principals of learner-centered, experienced-centered education for adults is the most pervasive theme, appearing in the writing of progressive, humanistic,

radical, psychological, integrated knowledge, and moral theorists. Components essential to successful professional development activities, those which result in sustained, changed behavior, incorporate a theoretical rationale supporting the change and an intellectual basis motivating the desire to alter classroom practice. Efficacy results when opportunities to discuss and observe the model, concept, or innovation in practice are provided. Practice with feedback in a controlled setting such as a workshop is essential. Further, implementation of the innovation with collegial support is cited as critical. (Joyce & Showers 1983; Hall, 1986; Kolk, 1990). Finally, planners cognizant of change theory recognize and plan for the process and stages individuals experience as the change is implemented. (Hall, 1986).

These behaviors and characteristics may also be viewed through a different lens. Theoretical rationale equates with intellectual knowledge. Cooperation, discussion, and practice is seen as participatory empowerment. Initiating change leads to reflective practice. Sustained, altered behavior results in critical understanding.

The redefining of one district's high school has been initiated by successfully applying these four components to both a new program and structure as well as to the professional development activities undertaken to support them. The comprehensive high school of 1200 students has been highly tracked, generally structured with three to four levels for all

academic courses. Teachers, solidly committed to the structure, advocate increased tracking. The success of the students in the lower tracks, however, has been marginal, and these students, as the research indicates (Oakes, 1986; Slavin, 1987) are frequently disaffected, manifesting anti-social, anti-school behavior.

This became dramatically clear when grade comparisons for every student in the school were completed for two consecutive years. Students in honor level courses had the highest averages which were further boosted by a weighted grading system. Regents level students received the next highest averages which again were boosted by the weighted system, although not as strongly as the honors boost. The comprehensive students received the lowest grades and no weight boost. The faculty was unconcerned with the inequity, never questioning that if instruction were delivered at the correct level of difficulty and complexity, the comprehensive level students should do as well as those in higher tracks, which is the fundamental argument undergirding the tracking premise.

The statistical information was underscored by a consultant who interviewed samples of the high school population including students, faculty, administration, and support personnel. The disaffection of students in the comprehensive level track emerged as a pressing concern. Likewise, teachers of these students expressed frustration as well. Yet, teachers continued to support the structure. Change was needed. The staff was resistant, suspicious, and comfortably insulated.

Applying the lens of intellectual knowledge, participatory

empowerment, reflective practice, and critical understanding, the entrenched values and practices of the school are in the process of being redefined.

Intellectual Knowledge Through Professional Development

Using the intellectual knowledge lens which is characterized by transformational leadership, problem-finding perspective, and an educational agenda (Foster, 1989; Giroux, 1988) as an initial basis for change, those most likely to be receptive were identified, including the high school principal, a department head, and a few teachers. Following lengthy discussions, a committee to study tracking was formed. Research was gathered; practices of districts in the region were surveyed; and an animated debate identifying the strengths and limitations of tracking within each of the departments was conducted. The results were summarized and shared with the school community through department meetings and informal channels.

Recognizing that initiation of change in so entrenched a system would require the active commitment of the administration, as early as three years before the Tracking Committee was formed, the field was "seeded" by frequent discussions of the tracking issue with the principal, including sharing of articles and research, and pointing to the possibilities of alternative structures. Through a regional association, a conference on tracking was conducted which involved the participation of numerous school districts. The abstract level of intellectual

knowledge slowly became internalized, expressed as belief. From this came the possibility of change.

Participatory Empowerment Through Professional Development

Participatory empowerment became a second factor contributing to modifications in the school structure. Characterized by a collective perspective, cooperation and collaboration, and shared leadership (Drucker, 1989; Maeroff, 1988), a new program, one which will become a prototype was made regarding introduction of a pilot program in which grade 9 students in English and social studies classes would be grouped heterogeneously except for an honors level, with considerable negative fallout, a few who had been part of the early stages and who experienced alterations in personal intellectual and knowledge beliefs emerged as willing to support the pilot. An upper grades English teacher who had been eager to introduce his unique approach to the organizational stage of writing sought the opportunity to do so with grade nine students. Two social studies teachers who wanted to work more closely with English teachers on interdisciplinary instruction also volunteered. Through a series of meetings and workshops, the professionals, with the support of the administrators who were involved, identified the expansion of the writing program and areas of coordination among team members. Effective strategies for teaching heterogeneously grouped classes were included. The participants defined their needs and worked together to prepare

for the change. Administration continues to bring them together to promote discussion and problem solving. Everyone's ultimate goal is student achievement.

As the involved faculty gains confidence in the program's efficacy through experience and collaboration, the administration nurtures their empowerment. Suggestions, including elimination of the honors track as separate and moving those students into the heterogeneous population with an honors program within the heterogeneous classes, were made to the Tracking Committee by the practitioners. The involved administrators moreover, devised original and well-received innovations as well. "We can't," gave way to "We are."

Reflective Practice Through Professional Development

Truly altered behavior occurs as professionals engage in reflective practice. Creative applications, problem solving, beliefs and values emerge. (Shon, 1987; Sergiovanni, 1988). Teachers state that they can't recognize which students would have been in one or the other track. As the practitioners request more time for collaboration, invite one another into their classrooms, exchange ideas, and discuss possibilities, reflective practice is occurring. Participatory empowerment and reflective practice occur on a continuum. At what point the behavior advances to the next level is moot. What remains significant is that the practitioners engage in the behaviors which, in fact, redefine programs, and more significantly,

individual behaviors which ultimately result in a restructured environment.

Critical Understanding Through Professional Development

Because this program is new, the highest level of personal change, critical understanding, has not yet been fully manifested. As the practitioners move from the introductory stages of implementation of heterogeneously grouped grade 9 English and social studies classes to a more practiced level, one anticipates that they will strive to alter and improve, feel safer in taking risks, and will inquire and critique (Giroux, 1988; Foster, 1989) the changes which are redefining their roles and the school.

Implications for University Preparation

The university programs should continue to serve as models for the administrators who have extended the reflective, intellectual, critical and participatory exemplars into active models. To achieve this goal the following recommendations are made. The University should:

1. become sensitive to the existing cultural norms in schools while continuing to discuss alternative practices.
2. become a forum for collegial linkages offering support, insight, and sustenance for continued intellectual development.

3. offer a perspective on leadership that values leader as facilitator, communicator, and trustee of moral values and ethics, and to offer opportunities for development of these attributes to prospective administrators.
4. support self critique and metacognition as a means to question personal beliefs and aspire toward leadership practices meaningful for all individuals.
5. support educational leaders in reconceptualizing questions concerning the critical issues in education.
6. provide a forum where practitioners can link the emerging knowledge-base concerning adult learning, change theory, and school culture to exemplars of practice. In other words, a forum for imagining the possibilities.

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